The Mysterious Ways of Wang Foo

By Sidney C. Partridge

The Golden Carp

NO European student of China and its ways has ever successfully completed the list of the many and various uses to which its wonderful plant, the bamboo, has been put. There certainly is no more remarkable illustration in nature of the adaptation of a plant to man's needs than is furnished by this graceful and pliant grass—for, strictly speaking, it is really that, and not a tree. It grows anywhere and everywhere, and with such rapidity that its progress can be easily marked from day to day with the naked eye. Indeed, one of the awful punishments of the early code was to tie a culprit securely down over a pointed sprout and allow it gradually to force its way through his prostrate form, thus killing him by inches.

From the cradle to the grave it is the celestial's faithful friend and servant. He is rocked in it in his infancy, fed with it in his childhood, supplied with every variety of utensil from it in his manhood, and finally carried on it to his last "happy home." His house, his furniture, his tools, his books, his chopsticks, his nets, his pipes—the staff that sustains him and the rod that smites him—are all part and parcel of the same heavenly plant. No wonder that they gratefully speak of it as one of the gods' best gifts to man. Over sixty varieties, no two of them alike, are mentioned in the native books, and the literature on the subject is inexhaustible.

"Bamboo encouragement" is a familiar term to every Chinese schoolboy. He knows that when a little gentle stimulus is needed to make him "back" his books more thoroughly, the ever-ready "graceful grass" in the teacher's hands will furnish it on the moment. In this he is at a little disadvantage as compared with the American boy, who can see the rod and sometimes dodge it, for he recites with his back to the instructor and—unless there be a convenient mirror at the back of the schoolroom, which there never is—the chastening and stimulating bamboo does its fatal work before he can avoid it. The Chinese professor of the native lore takes no chances with his game, and he generally aims pretty straight. And this is how it comes to pass that a few judiciously administered blows—even in later life—to bring out the truth, are popularly known as "bamboo encouragement."

"The prisoner seems to be a little modest or diffident about answering my questions," a magistrate will say in a native court; "he needs a little encouragement." And the lictors proceed forthwith to "encourage" him with some fifteen or twenty well directed blows, which generally has the effect of loosening the strings of the tongue and enabling him to incriminate his neighbors.

These introductory remarks explain the peculiar phraseology of the suggestion which Tak-Loy, assistant compradore of Royce & Co.'s warehouse, made to Mr. Royce himself when the latter accused the head wharf coolie of stealing.

"There surely is a lot of thieving going on right here under our very noses, and you can't tell me that he doesn't know about it. Of course, he knows all about it and is getting a big squeeze out of it himself. But I can't get any satisfaction out of it. He swears the tallies are all right when they leave the gangplank, and all right again when they get to the go-down with the rice bags, and yet we are nearly a thousand pounds short on the Chip Sing's cargo alone, and she's a small boat, don't you know."

"Mr. Loycee," replied the compradore, "I think more botter we encoulage he, how fashion you tinkee?"

"Encourage him! Why, good heavens, what do you mean? Make him steal more?"

"Please you s'cluse me. No stealee more. My talkee China school encoulage, all same bamboo."

"Oh, you mean to beat him, do you? Is that what you call your bamboo encouragement? Well, how are you going to do it without all of us getting into the mixed court and paying more than the whole thing is worth?"

"P'laps more better you talkee policeman first. S'pose he can savvee, all light, s'pose he no savvee, more better bamboo that number one coolie."

"All right, we'll put the police on this the first thing tomorrow morning."

Chief Detective Morehead of the Shanghai office was engaged in a private conversation with Wang Foo, the famous detector of crime, when Mr. Royce's card was sent in from the outer room. Mr. Wang had been requested to come up from Hongkong (at the earnest solicitation of Dr. Cortelyou, the United States consul) and co-operate with the local police in their attempts to solve the mystery of the murder of an American subject, and they were discussing the details of the crime just at this moment.

"We will have to suspend the conversation for a while, Mr. Wang, for this gentleman has come to consult me about a complicated robbery case and I know he is anxious for an immediate interview."

"Certainly," replied the gracious Chinese guest; "would you like me to call again a little later in the day?"

"Not at all; I want you to remain right here, if you kindly will, for I am sure you will be interested in this case, and I have no doubt you may be of some very practical help to us. Won't you stay?"

"Always at your service and that of the department, Mr. Morehead."

Mr. Royce entered and, after having been introduced to Wang Foo, expressed himself as especially pleased that he could be present at the interview. The three gentlemen took seats and the officer motioned to Mr. Royce to begin.

WHEN THE STOKER STRUCK HIM HE CRIED OUT, "SWIM UP THE DRAGON POOL, YOU GOLDEN CARP!"

He gave a full and detailed account of what had taken place on the wharf and in the go-down and ended up by saying that he had no doubt whatever that some very skillful thieving was going on all the time—and that the head wharf coolie was in league with the gang—but in spite of the most careful watching, not a trace of anything could be found. As an illustration, he cited the case of the Chip Sing, with five hundred bags of rice. Every bag was examined on leaving the ship and a bamboo tally given for it to the coolie who carried it across the wharf to the go-down, and who then handed his tally to the compradore and received his few coppers cash in his hand. There was absolutely no chance for any tampering with the bags, for they were watched from the time they left the ship until they were deposited on the go-down floor.

Now for the mystery. The bags were weighed at Swatow on leaving and then the iron hatch was securely locked; they were weighed again on being taken out of the go-down at Shanghai and they were several hundred pounds short! Not a human being had had access to them on board the ship—the mate swore to that, for he held the keys—and they had been constantly and securely locked on shore. The only possible suggestion was rats, but rats unfortunately cannot gnaw through the steel plates of a steamer or the galvanized sides and floors of a warehouse; and, then, rats always leave traces of their work in the holes in the bags and the scattered grains of rice lying about.

"You are quite sure the bags were all intact?" inquired the chief.

"Absolutely so—every one of them is examined, to see that no strings have been cut, when it is brought ashore."

"It certainly looks like ghosts, Mr. Wang, doesn't it?" turning to the quiet but very interested listener.

"Yes; you know the Chinese believe that hungry ghosts are particularly fond of rice, especially of this fine Swatow variety," smiled the man of mystery in reply. "But—they like it cooked, not raw, and they never cook it themselves, so you see they are dependent upon their human friends to secure it and cook it for them. Ghosts are made the scapegoats for a good deal in China, as they are in England, but they are never guilty of purloining uncooked food; that, I am obliged to say in their defense, is a purely mortal pastime. So, gentlemen, I am afraid we shall have to rule out the ghosts as well as the rats."

"What theory or explanation have you to offer, then, sir?" inquired Mr. Royce.

"It would be impossible for me to offer any explanation offhand, sir—whatever conception I may already have formed mentally—without a careful survey of the scene of the supposed robbery and the privilege of an interview or two with the parties most nearly concerned. Perhaps Mr. Morehead would do me the honor to show me over the scene tomorrow."

"Delighted to do so, Mr. Wang, at any hour that may suit Mr. Royce."

When the same party of three met a few envenings afterward, Wang Foo took from his sleeve the leather-covered notebook in which he had entered the data of the robbery, and, accepting the Manila cheroot which his host tendered him, leaned back in his chair, and, looking at Mr. Royce in a strange, quizzical way, asked slowly but distinctly:

"You say that every bag of rice was weighed carefully at Swatow and again at Shanghai?"

"Yes, sir."

"And you found a difference of several hundred pounds?"

"Yes, sir;" in fact, nearly a thousand on the consignment"

"And you have taken every precaution and made every effort to find the loss, but without success?"

"Indeed we have, sir, but the leak goes on as merrily as ever."

"I dislike to seem discourteous in differing with you, Mr. Royce, but there is one precaution you didn't take."

"And pray, what is that?"

"You weighed the rice bags—but you omitted to weigh the coolies!"

"Weigh the coolies? What do you mean, sir?"

"Why, simply this: The excess weight of the gang of coolies at the close of the day would be about equal to the weight of the stolen rice. It's like the law of specific gravity, you know; the weight of the article is equal to the weight of the water which it displaces."

"Do you mean they stole it and hid it in their clothes then?"

"I most certainly do, sir."

"Well, when and how did they steal it? Solve that mystery for me and I will acknowledge you are indeed a wonder."

Wang Foo put his long hand up his right-hand sleeve and drew out therefrom a slender piece of bamboo about eight inches long. It was hollowed out and the end was sharply pointed like a pen. Attached to it was a long bag resembling a stocking with a very small leg and a very large foot.

"Here, gentlemen, is your solution. You see this is neither 'rat' nor 'ghost'; on the contrary, it is something very simple and human. The coolie who carries the rice bag has this apparatus concealed beneath his clothing. The bag is fastened around his waist and the bamboo is concealed in his collar. When he is given the bag on the ship, he places it on his right shoulder and steadies it with his right hand, his left hand grasping the tally-stick which the compradore colects. Now for the trick. With his right hand under the bag he pushes the bamboo pipe up through the meshes until he reaches the grains of rice and then they begin to flow slowly but surely down through the tube into the stocking. The rocking motion of his body as he walks assists the flow—like good exercise for the dyspeptic—and before he reaches the go-down he has several pounds inside his garments. He then draws the bamboo down into his collar and no one is ever the wiser."

"Did you ever see anything cleverer than that, Mr. Morehead?" asked the merchant.

"It certainly beats me," was the chief's brief but emphatic answer.

"And, pray, what do they call this diabolical invention, Mr. Wang?"

"I am told," replied the detective, with a rather significant smile, "I am told that they call it 'the little bamboo assistant or encourager.' Your compradore suggested a little 'encouragement,' did he not?"

"Yes, but not exactly that kind."

"True, not exactly that kind, but still of the same bamboo, was it not?"

"Yes, I believe it was—a wonderful plant, when all is said and done, Mr. Wang, is it not?"

"One of heaven's best gifts to man," replied the Chinese scholar. "As the ancient saying goes:

"How restful by the waters cool,
To watch its graceful waving!"

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"As far as the case itself is concerned, Mr. Wang," remarked Dr. Cortelyou, the consul, to his visitor from Hongkong, "it seems clear enough to the American eye, but you know I haven't been here four years without realizing that in every one of these international rows 'there's always a little nigger in the woodpile,' as we say in the United States. You are familiar with that phrase, are you not?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, sir, though I am told that in Boston they express the same sentiment a little differently."

"Ah, how is that?"

"I believe they say that 'there's a lurking suspicion of a diminutive son of Africa's having concealed himself in the accumulated kindling,' or something to that effect."

"Diminutive son of Africa is very good," laughed the consul.

"Yes, you know the difference between Boston and Chicago, for instance, in the mode of expression reminds me of the difference between the classic language of the literati of China and the vernacular of the provinces, sometimes. I suppose you find it so in every country, do you not?"

"As far as my limited travels permit me to judge, I believe you do—but to go back to our case: The evidence all shows that there had been bad feeling between the second mate and the stoker for some time, owing to some row on shipboard, and it finally culminated in this Hongkew scrimmage, when Jackson attempted to throw the fellow into the creek and he had to hit him back, as he says, in self-defense. Of course, Jackson was drunk at the time, for he and some of his cronies had been imbibing at that 'Happy Anchorage' place near the bridge and I suppose when he came out and saw the stoker he thought it would be a good chance to get even with him on shore. Now when men are under the influence of liquor, they generally come through all right, as you know, when a really sober man would succumb, but in this case he must have fallen very heavily on the pavement, for the doctor said his skull was fractured when they picked him up."

"Well, where is your 'nigger in the woodpile?'"

"Why, just here, Mr. Wang, and this is really the reason why I have sent for you; the jinriksha coolie and the others all testify that when the stoker struck him he cried out: 'Swim up the dragon pool, you golden carp; swim up the pool.' And in spite of all my efforts, I cannot find anybody who can explain these words. Now, what had Jackson to do with a dragon pool and why did the stoker tell him to 'swim up?' There seems to be some mysterious hidden meaning in these expressions and the more I think of them the more I am convinced that there's some connection between them and the murder."

Wang Foo looked very thoughtful for a moment. "Have you inquired of the missionaries?" he asked.

"Yes, I have had a number of them in here with their Chinese teachers and all that I can find is that 'The carp swims up the dragon pool' is a phrase which is used to signify literary ambition. They tell me that it hangs on the walls of Chinese schools and is engraved on the slabs of ink and painted on the covers of the books and all that sort of thing. The idea seems to be that as the carp struggles up against the current of the stream, so the scholar ought to struggle onward and upward against all obstacles."

"They are quite correct, Mr. Consul; it is one of the most treasured phrases ii our literary life, and would be instantly recognized by any Chinese scholar."

"True, but what in the world has a literary phrase to do with a couple of sailors and a street fight? That's what puzzles me. They are about the last words in the world you would expect to hear from the lips of a second mate—to say nothing of an ordinary stoker."

"Yes, sir; they are hardly part of the language of the sea, though a

good many native sailors would remember them from their early schooling, as they learn these sayings very early in life."

"Still," persisted the consul, "I am perfectly convinced that there was some special reason for the use of the words and that when we find that reason we shall have some additional light thrown on the case. Now, Mr. Wang, I appeal to you. You are the only man in China who can help me out, and I shall never rest content with the evidence until I do."

"Be assured, sir, that I shall do everything in my power to assist you, but, as you well know, these things take time. I hope to see you again in—shall we say a week?"

"A week from tonight, Mr. Wang, and my good wishes go with you."

When Wang Foo reached the home of the basketmaker, where he always stayed while in the settlement of Shanghai, he enjoyed with them the humble evening repast of rice and eggs and pork and cabbage, with some choice Hongkong pickles which they have saved in his honor, and after the tea and pipes he mounted the little stairs to the upper room and gave himself to thought—and work.

A gentle knock was heard at the door, and, opening it, he saw before him little Toy Ching, the basketmaker's son.

"Is the honorable guest very busy just now?" he timidly asked.

"Not at all, little prince; pray enter and be seated."

The lad entered, but reverently remained standing—he would not dare to sit in the presence of the scholar.

"Would the venerable elder-born hear him 'back' his morning's lesson?"

"With pleasure. Give me the little book."

It was the eighth chapter of the Analects and the subject was, "The Three Duties of a Gentleman." Carefully they went over the words together: "To banish from his bearing all violence and levity; to set his face ever to the truth; to purge his speech of all that is low and base."

"I fear I have greatly worried the teacher," Toy Ching said, as he bowed his thanks and bade his guest goodnight.

"To teach without being weary—is not that true joy?" replied the gentle scholar as he bade his pupil depart in peace. "Stay a moment; what have you painted on the cover of the book?"

The boy held up the volume to his gaze, and Wang Foo read these golden words:

"The Carp Swims Up the Pool."

The sailor, the stoker, the carp and the pool—what was the mystic spell that had linked these four together? That was the problem and he would begin to try to solve it on the morrow

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The partitions between the upper stories of the ordinary Chinese houses in the settlement are not always of brick or even of plaster, but of thin boards so full of cracks and knotholes that they have to be pasted over with paper to secure even a semblance of privacy. This, which would be most objectionable to European tenants, does not seem to disturb the native mind in the least. They seem to accept the condition of things very philosophically, and the fact that domestic squabbles occasionally occur does not in the least affect their serenity of mind, even though several families enjoy the proceedings together. Once in a while, however, things are said and done that if overheard are apt to cause trouble, and such was the case on the evening when the Chang family, at a certain number in the Lucky Star alley, discussed its private plans in the full hearing of the Choo family, who rented the adjoining apartment. Now it happened that the eldest son of the Changs was a close literary rival of the eldest son of the Choos, and they were both soon to take their departure for the great examinations at the capital. To whom would the coveted honor go? To a Chang or to a Choo? Perhaps to one—possibly to neither.

Every encouragement had been given them by their relatives and friends and all sorts of good wishes had been tendered them. They had both burned large quantities of midnight oil in perfecting their studies and, as far as the public mind was concerned, both were equally well fitted for the contest. There remained just one all-important thing, viz.—the consulting of the soothsayer at the temple and the selecting of the lucky day and hour for the departure. This detail was duly attended to and the young men set off for the capital.

It was the last day of the third session, the most critical time of all in the Chinese mind, and the one when they needed the utmost concentration of thought on the literary tasks before them, when Chang, the father, announced to his family in the upper room that he was going to "seek the omen of the golden carp" upon the morrow.

"If the carp swims up the dragon pool, our son will win," he cried; "it is the unfailing omen of the gods of literature. If he swims down, he fails. At exactly noon the carp will give the answer."

Through the cracks of the partition the Choos had overheard it all! A hurried secret consultation followed and it was resolved to thwart the plan of the Changs at any cost. Early in the morning Choo, the father, hastened to the Temple of the Golden Carp outside the eastern gate. He sought the head priest and thus addressed him, in the privacy of the inner court:

"Venerable father, which way swims the golden carp tomorrow?" pointing to the rock-work pool before them.

The old priest eyed him carefully. "One cannot tell beforehand the ways and whims of the sacred fish," he answered. "He may swim up; he may swim down; 'tis not for mortals to control him."

"Listen!" said old Choo, as he opened out before him a palm filled with silver coin, "tomorrow at exactly noon, he swims down the pool, not up—you understand?"

The priest's eyes glistened as he saw the coin. He hesitated for a moment, then seized the proffered bribe. "Silver may sometimes change the course of gold," he said; "is it not so written in the Book of Changes?"

Punctuality was not of paramount importance at the Temple of the Golden Carp, and so it came to pass that it was exactly noon by the ancient timepiece of the temple when the city time was only eleven, and this was also the reason why the aged priest mistook the sailors for the Changs when they presented themselves at the dragon pool.

"That fortune-teller in the other temple is a villain and a cheat," exclaimed the stoker. "I follow my aged father's guidance and seek the omen of the golden carp. If he swims up, then I slay Jackson—if he swims down, then the second mate slays me! Watch him closely, for my life depends upon it!"

They stood in silence before the pool while the great golden fish lay quietly at the bottom of the water. The old priest seized a gong and struck it twice, then blew a shrill note or two upon a little pipe. The fish suddenly started and, rising almost to the surface, shot down like an arrow to the farther end of the inclosure.

"He swims down! He swims down!" cried the sailors, and, rushing out into the roadway, jumped into their jinrikishas and started for the river.

Just an hour later old Chang appeared at the Dragon pool and watched the priest go through the same performance. The golden carp swam up.

"The omen! The omen! He wins, he wins!" he cried with joy. "My son shall wear the golden button of the second degree; honor at last has come to the family of Chang."

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Wang Foo, the consul, and Inspector Gubbins were closeted together in the inner office when the time came to unravel the tale. The man of mystery explained it all. He showed how the stoker's family, after listening to his tale of the mate's cruelty, had made him swear on the altar of his gods to avenge the insult to the family name; how he had decided to meet Jackson somewhere while on shore and fight it out with him, if need be, to the death; how he had been driven at last to consult the great omen of the golden carp and how, when the mate attacked him, he had shrieked out the words, "Swim up the Dragon pool!" fearing the man would drown him in the river. He told the story of the Changs and Choos and how the mistake in time had led the priest to mistake one party for the other, and had saved the day for both.

"Mr. Wang," the consul said, as he rose and took his hands, "you have done a splendid work for truth and justice in clearing up this mystery. We know more about the Chinese people and their ways and thoughts today than we ever did before. I thank you."

"But just how did you get hold of this gold-fish-temple connection with it?" asked the inspector with some interest.

"Oh, that came about quite naturally. Some teachers in the school my little friend attends told me of it and the sacred fish, and I thought I would look it up. I happened to notice the old clock was an hour off, so that led the old priest, for a few coins, to tell me the story—you see, I was disguised as a brother priest myself and that threw him off his guard."

"And how do they work the gold-fish trick? I mean, how do they make him swim up or down?"

"Oh, I learned that in the old temple at Foochow, where they train them. It takes five years or more to train a carp like that. You see, one blow on the song means 'Up' and two blow on the gong means 'Up' and two post that supports the gong goes deep into the earth and connects underneath with the pool; this enables the sound to be carried through the water—the fish couldn't hear it through the air—that's what mystifies the people."

"Just one question more, Mr. Wang, if you please, before we part; what earthly connection has all this with the case of the rice-stealing on the wharf, that you showed up so cleverly?"

"Why, you see, that involves some Chinese family connections that you European gentlemen do not often take note of—but which we always particularly inquire into. The wharf-coolie's wife lives next door to the basketmaker's, where I stay, and we heard the whole story from her. In her anxiety to exonerate her husband, she let out the words, 'Those rice-coolies have longer socks on their shoulders than they have on their feet,' and this led me to suspect the little bamboo trick, of which I had once heard in Hongkong."

"But why didn't he expose them himself?"

"Gentlemen, his life wouldn't have been worth a Mexican dollar if he had. They were thirty men against one. Times were hard and they were desperate for food—that is all."

"I think, after this, we will weigh the coolies as well as the rice," remarked the inspector. "Eh, Mr. Wang?"

"Yes, and bring your own scales so that they can't tamper with them beforehand!"

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Millionaire to Be Author of New Tariff Bill

Joseph Fordney of Michigan Will Write Republican Bill to Be Introduced in the Next Congress—His Qualifications for the Work, and the Kind of Bill He Will Write—He Says Government Ownership of Railroads Would Bring About the Most Dangerous Political Machine in the World.

BY JAMES B. MORROW.

SOON people will want to know about Joseph Warren Fordney. Daily they will see his name in Washington telegrams and in the editorial columns of their newspapers. Praise will be given him without stint. Oral cudgels will be laid upon his back and head. "Patriot," one group of his countrymen will shout. "Reactionary," will cry another.

The commotion will be caused by a tariff bill named in his honor, or to his dishonor, as those will say who abhor its schedules. Whatever may happen in the Senate, where the margin between parties will be slender, the House of Representatives in the next Congress can be counted on as being soundly republican.

A tariff bill, therefore, will be written—a bill bristling with the doctrine of protection. The thirteen republican members of the committee on ways and means will do the writing. At their head, as chairman, duly chosen and accepted, will be Mr. Fordney of Michigan.

* * *

There may be rumors of republican dissensions, but Mr. Fordney will be chosen—chosen under the rule of seniority and because he knows more about the tariff than will any other republican in the new House of Representatives.

The bill, by custom, will bear his name, although twelve other men will be joint authors with himself. Next year a President is to be elected. Undoubtedly the Fordney bill will be one of the great issues of the campaign.

Naturally, Mr. Fordney himself will figure in the debates on the stump and in the press. Descriptions will not agree. Testimonies will contradict. Judgments will vary. But the facts, no matter what is said, will not change. And some of the facts are herein to be set down, inasmuch as they are interesting and potentially of much concern.

Now, at the very edge of what is to come, it should be stated that Joseph Warren Fordney is not a milk and water man. Politically, is no sissy. What he believes, he believes, not lazily, indifferently or timidly, but openly and often almost riotously. Protection is his main doctrine—not protection minus this or that, but protection plus everything in sight. It is right, as he sees the light, and so the case is closed and his mind made up.

Yet his voice is peaceful ordinarily and his bearing most friendly. "I want to be courteous," he says in Congress, as, with a battle-ax, he cleaves the skull of a disputatious colleague. For fifty years this man has been chopping down trees and sawing them into lumber. A pine is to be felled and he fells it. He has no ill will for the pine, but it must be converted into planks and boards, scantlings and beams.

Nor can there be any compromising or bargaining with the tree. It stands but it must fall and it does fall. In other terms, Mr. Fordney is direct in his physical processes and, therefore, not ambiguous in his statements. "The gentleman is talking nonsense and he knows it," Mr. Fordney once observed, addressing a windy person in the House of Representatives. "Any man with brains enough to grease a gimlet" ought to do so and so, he remarked on another day.

"I would say this: I am not a lawyer," and Mr. Fordney waved his right hand in a semi-circle, at still another time, so as to erect an invisible fence around the hundred or so of lawyers who were listening, "and I have no prejudice against members of the legal profession, but I wish that half of those who sit in this House were business men and not lawyers."

Then he added: "I have seldom, if ever, seen a will drawn by a lawyer that did not complicate the wishes of the deceased." Whereupon the swarm of counselors-at-law who had been nagging him while he was engaged in making a tariff speech busied themselves in other directions.

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For the man who demands protection on the products that he grows or manufactures but free trade in the things that he purchases, Mr. Fordney's contempt is measureless, his condemnation without limit. He holds that high wages and cheap goods cannot be simultaneous blessings.

"You promise to reduce prices by one-half," he thundered, one afternoon, aiming his shot at several gentlemen who had been talking nonsense, as he said. "And yet," he went on, "you are going to make this a land of sunshine where milk and honey will flow, where men can sit around in idleness, have more to eat, more to wear, more to say and less to do. We have persons in Michigan who talk the same way, but they are in our asylum for the insane at Kalamazoo."

Wherever he goes, Mr. Fordney carries his torch along, with plenty of matches, so that he may light the way of those who are in the dark, whether they want him to or not. A famous elocutionist had said, and the newspapers had printed it, that he favored a law that would reduce the hours of labor, increase the wages of labor and lower the price of products.

"I don't see why it can't be done," said a barber who was trimming Mr. Fordney's hair. Mr. Fordney gasped once or twice and then lit his torch.

"You know more about your own business than about any other man's business," he began. "You will admit that, will you not?"

"Yes," and the barber's scissors were silent, as he looked at the back of Mr. Fordney's head.

"You are working ten hours a day."

"Yes."

"And charge 25 cents for cutting hair."

"Yes."

"To lower the cost of the product of your labor would mean that you would have to lower the price of cutting hair."

"That's so."

"Well, how are you going to work eight hours a day instead of ten, cut men's hair for 15 cents instead of 25 cents and at the same time increase your earnings? Tell me that, will you?"

"Oh, that is not a fair illustration," the barber said.

"But it is one that you know all about and when you figure it out I will listen to you in regard to the product of some other man's labor."

Public characters, fluent of speech, are not laways accurate. Having little to say and saying it at length, they both repeat and contradict. Mr. Fordney's most satisfying sport is to track such orators, when they are discussing his favorite subject, and chase them up a tree or under a fence.

Ten years ago he began systematically to study the tariff laws of this and other countries. It was then that he became a member of the committee on ways and means. He can quote

REPRESENTATIVE FORDNEY OF MICHIGAN.

the language of foreign ministers, ancient and modern, and can give the prices of commodities year by year and, in some cases, month by month. Wages, here and abroad, by divisions, such as Europe and America, and under subdivisions, as, for instance, Boston and Manchester, or Pittsburgh and Vienna, can be stated by him offhand.

The epitome of his tariff views is contained in the folowing sixty-four words: "I know of no interest in the United States that is producing an article for consumption on which article I want to see the duty reduced to a point that would permit the foreigner to come in and enjoy our markets and take them away from our laboring men or deprive our laboring men of their right to produce that article in this country."

By "no interest," he means so he declares, the iron of the north, as well as the cotton of the south. He would have the United States make the goods that are in the shirt of the man in Mississippi and the shoes that are on the feet of the man in Massachusetts. But the law that he would write would be "reasonably, correctly and equitably protective."

Physically, except in the matter of weight, Mr. Fordney belongs to the Grover Cleveland type. He is tall—five and eleven, perhaps—and has gray eyes, a grizzled mustache and a resolute but attractive face. His clothing is of the best and his thin, broad-toed shoes are always blackened. "Sir," says he in the House of Representatives, addressing the Speaker, and the habit and the word have become a part of his outside conversation. His age is sixty-five, but he looks younger. This is the story that he told the writer:

"My father," he said, "was an Indiana farmer. There were thirteen boys and girls in his family, I being the youngest, and there have been thirteen children in my own family. Indiana, during my childhood, was a wild country. We lived in a wooded region and my father between crops ran a sawmill and a gristmill. He would start the upright saw through a log of poplar, walnut or oak and then go to the other part of the mill, where wheat was being ground into flour or corn into meal. I would watch the log and call him before it was sawed through.

"Country schools were poor and far apart. My education was sadly neglected. When I was fifteen, we moved to Saginaw, Mich. I had worked in Indiana on what is now known as the Big Four railroad, plowing the right of way, with two teams of horses, and operating a scraper. The contractor paid me $10 a month.

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"During my first winter in Michigan I received $15 a month as chore boy for a cook in a lumber camp. The second winter I did the cooking myself, in which branch of the lumber industry I worked for three seasons. Then I became a chopper in the woods. Indeed, I learned to do everything around a camp, from cooking to chopping, and from hauling logs to floating them down rivers.

"Back in Indiana I had seen poplar and walnut grow greatly in value. Before a railroad was built through our country forests were practically useless. Lumber could not be sent to market. With the railroad came sawmills and men looking for bargains.

"I thought about the change I had seen in Indiana and concluded that a similar change would occur in Michigan sooner or later. So I decided to make lumbering my business and to learn how to estimate standing timber. I spent my summers, therefore, in journeys of exploration and became a good judge of pine forests.

"With a tent and a supply of food on my back, I would travel for a week or ten days in the woods and make notes about the timber I had examined, estimating its quality and quantity and reporting to the men who had hired me.

"For this work, done only in summer, I was paid from $5 to $8 a day. Naturally, I wanted to own some pine land of my own. I had no money, however. Married at the age of twenty, with a family coming on and with days during which I had no employment, the accumulation of capital was practically impossible.

"The future did not look promising, but my fortune turned suddenly. A wealthy man said he would supply the money, if I would supply the skill, and make me his partner in the business of buying and selling standing timber. I was to draw $1,800 a year and expenses and to receive half the profits. The partnership was profitable and for the first time in my life I knew how it felt to have plenty of money in my pocket.

"Presently I engaged in what is called the logging branch of the lumber industry. I bought pine land, cut the trees and had the logs sawed at mills owned by others. Later, I had mills of my own. Thereafter, I had a share in all of the profits, from the standing tree, which I estimated, to the sawed lumber waiting to be sold to some customer.

"I was engaged in the lumber business of Michigan for many years. Before all the forests in that part of the country were cut, I made investments elsewhere. I am interested now in a large Mississippi enterprise and in two logging projects in the state of Washington."

"How long," Mr. Fordney was asked, "have you been interested in the tariff question?"

"I can't rember the time when I wasn't a republican and a protectionist," he answered. "In their early married life my parents for a short time lived in Virginia. While I was a child I heard my mother tell of a neighbor who whipped his slaves. I wrongly thought that all planters were guilty of that practice.

"Although my father was a democrat, he believed in the intergity, the patriotism and the wisdom of Abraham Lincoln. So I grew up a Lincoln boy and from reading his speeches and hearing my mother talk I became a republican. The tariff also was discussed in my presence.

"I thought the subject over and came to this conclusion: If a saw is made in England and sold in the United States, then the man who makes the saw will be an Englishman, whereas he ought to be an American. 'Money,' I said to myself, 'should be kept at home.'

* * *

"Such was my crude conviction many years ago. It has been strengthened by my experience in business. I have since elaborated my definition of protection, have strung it out into several thousand words, but I have failed to make it any clearer than was my first thought on the question."

"You have been in politics for more than twenty years?"

"Yes, I was elected an alderman in Sagigaw, back in 1895, and re-elected in 1897. Then in 1898 I was nominated for Congress and was successful at the polls, although my opponent was an orator, while I had never made a speech. The district was democratic, but I won by a plurality of 1,700 votes. Since then I have been a candidate ten times and my plurality at each election was larger than in 1898."

"What other public question has attracted your attention?"

"Government ownership of public utilities is one of the greatest problems of the day. I am unalterably opposed to the proposition. It would take an hour for me to tell you why the owning and operating by the government of any sort of business would be wasteful and dangerous. The government, it is enough to say, can't be economical. It can't be efficient.

"Two sister ships were built for our Navy. They were alike in every particular. A contractor built one for $16,000,000. The government built the other at a cost of $21,000,000. Interest, taxes, insurance, drafting and inspection charges were paid, of course, by the contractor. Not one of those items, however, was added to the cost of the ship built by the government.

"It can be shown in every instance that railroads owned and operated by governments have failed to produce good results. Invariably the people have been taxed to meet the deficits incurred in the operation of the roads, although the rates for carrying freight were greatly increased over the rates charged under the system of private ownership. The man who does not travel is taxed to pay the fare of the man who does.

"Now, if the government takes over the railroads permanently, it will also take over all the telegraph and telephone lines in the country, as well as other interests. Last year 500,000 persons were employed in the different civil branches of the government, 225,000 were employed by the wire corporations and 200,000 by water transportation companies. Here we have, all told, about three millions of real and possible officeholders under the national government.

"Weak politicians in times of campaign excitement would yield to the pressure of such an army of voters. The army of voters would, of course, repay the political party that made the surrender, repay by voting a candidate into the White House and a majority into Congress.

"And the general public itself would pay in money, either through direct taxes or increased rates, the whole cost of the surrender, down to the last cent."

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